

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

35 USC § 112, 2nd paragraph

Claims 1-7 and 9 were rejected under 35 USC § 112, 2nd paragraph as being indefinite for use of the phrase "...downstream of an equilibrium stage where the feed gas enters the absorber...". The applicant respectfully disagrees with the examiner, especially in view of the applicant's description. Among other passages, the absorber is described in the paragraph spanning pages 6 and 7 as a trayed absorber with a plurality of equilibrium stages. Nevertheless, the applicant amended the claim by replacing the objected term 'equilibrium stage' with the term 'location'.

Regarding the examiner's rejection of claim 9 as lacking antecedent basis for the term "acid gas", the applicant respectfully notes that this term finds antecedent basis in the third line of claim 8 (from which claim 9 depends).

35 USC § 112, 1st paragraph

Claims 12-14 were rejected under 35 USC § 112, 1st paragraph as failing to comply with the written description requirement. More specifically, the examiner noted that the plurality of flash vessels would be inconsistent with the atmospheric flash vessel. The applicant agrees and appreciates the examiner's attention to this oversight. Claim 12 was canceled. It is noted that the subject matter of claim 12 (with changes according to the examiner's observations) was incorporated into claim 8.

35 USC § 102

Claims 1-3 and 6 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Gaskin (U.S. Pat. App. No. 2004003717). As claim 1 was amended to incorporate all of the elements of allowable claim 5, the rejection is moot.

Claims 8-9 and 11 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(e) as being anticipated by Mak (U.S. Pat. No. 7,424,808). As claim 8 was amended to incorporate all of the elements of allowable claim 13, the rejection is moot.

35 USC § 103

Claims 4 and 12 were rejected under 35 USC § 103 as being obvious over Gaskin in view of Mak. Once again, the rejection should be moot in light of the amendments to claims 1 and 8, from which claims 4 and 12 depend.

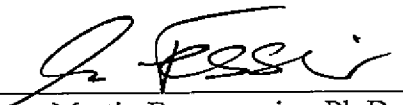
Allowable Subject Matter

The examiner indicated that **claims 5, 7, 10, and 13-20** would be allowable. The applicant agrees and amended claims 1 and 8 accordingly. Claim 21 was added to rephrase claim 10 as an independent claim, and claims 15-20 were left unchanged.

In view of the present amendments and arguments, the applicant believes that all claims are now in condition for allowance. Therefore, the applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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